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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: MARCH 18, 2009

Summary: The Government's notifications to "formally reinstate" the deposed Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry and 10 other judges of superior courts dominated headlines in all newspapers on Wednesday. U.S. Special envoy Holbrooke's statement that the "resolution of the judicial dispute prevented a political meltdown in Pakistan" received prominent display. Some major newspapers highlighted reports that the U.S. media "lauded" Pakistani leadership to settle the judicial crisis, and that the British media "hailed" reinstatement of the judges. Newspapers ran the U.S. State Department spokesman's remarks that the "U.S. is not going to tell Pakistani politicians how to end the Governor's rule in Punjab." All newspapers front-paged reports that the "Qazi courts started functioning in Swat." Reports that "Pakistan is not satisfied with Indian response about the Mumbai attacks" also figured prominently in all newspapers.

The aftermath of the restoration of the judiciary continued to be the burning question for the editorialists and op-ed writers in most major dailies. The centrist national daily, "The News," noted that "with the impediment of the restoration of the judges now cleared away we may be able to travel a little further along the road to democratic maturity." Likewise, the liberal Urdu daily, "Express," observed that "if the parties let go of this bitterness, there is no reason why the nation cannot have the same cordial atmosphere we saw at the start of the democratic process." The Lahore-based liberal daily, "Daily Times," opined that Pakistan is "today facing not only terrorism but also charges of terrorism. Will the politicians choose to come together and use the parliament to strengthen Pakistan instead of weakening it?" End Summary.

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News Stories  
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"Iftikhar, 4 Other SC Judges To Return On 22nd" "Dawn" (03/18)

"The government on Tuesday notified reinstatement of deposed Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry and 10 other judges of superior courts through two notifications, erasing lingering doubts about its intention."

"Problem Exists Despite Resolution Of Crisis: Holbrooke" "Dawn" (03/18)

"... The Washington Post quoted U.S. special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan as warning that while the resolution of the judicial dispute prevented a political meltdown in Pakistan, the underlying problem still existed, said Mr. Holbrooke who played a key role in

defusing the situation. The Post also quoted another senior State Department official as saying that the Obama administration 'understood from the beginning that the current government is not wildly popular.' Other U.S. officials told The New York Times that the Obama administration was reconsidering the hostile U.S. attitude towards Mr. Sharif."

"U.S. Media Lauds Pakistani Leadership" "Dawn" (03/18)

"One encouraging sign for Washington was the role played in the crisis by Army Chief Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani who let President Zardari know that he could not rely on soldiers to confront the protesters who were threatening to descend on Islamabad to demand the return of Chief Justice Chaudhry, the New York Times observed on Tuesday."

"British Media Hails Reinstatement" "Dawn" (03/18)

"The mainstream British media has welcomed the reinstatement of Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry and praised what is called the political sagacity of the Zardari administration for stepping back from the brink."

"U.S. Not Telling Pakistan How To Settle Punjab Dispute" "Dawn" (03/18)

"The U.S. State Department has said that Washington is not going to tell Pakistani politicians how to end the Governor's rule in Punjab or to revoke the disqualification order against the Sharif brothers."

'Well, look, that's the decision that's going to be left to Pakistani authorities,' said spokesman Robert Wood."

"Pentagon Pledges Anti-terror Support To Pakistan" "The News" (03/18)

"The Pentagon and the State Department officials expressed appreciation for the Pakistani leaders efforts to avert crisis in a reconciliatory manner and reaffirmed the Barack Obama administration's resolve to help Pakistan with its anti-terrorism fight."

"Patterson Calls Gilani" "Daily Times," "Pakistan Observer" (03/18)

"U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Anne W. Patterson Tuesday talked to Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani by telephone. According to a government statement, Patterson conveyed her government's felicitations for peaceful resolution of the political impasse and the reinstatement of the sacked judges."

"Governor's Rule To End Soon: PM" "Dawn" (03/18)

"Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani said on Tuesday his government was working to end governors' rule in Punjab. 'I am against governor's rule (in Punjab) and it is the government's top priority to end it as soon as possible,' he told reporters in Islamabad."

"U.S. Aid For Pakistan To Remain Unaffected: Haqqani" "The News" (03/18)

"Ambassador to the U.S. Husain Haqqani on Tuesday hoped that the U.S. assistance for his country would remain unaffected by the domestic political developments, as the American support was aimed at the uplift of the people and the stability of Pakistan. He said this while commenting on a story that appeared in The Washington Post on Tuesday that claimed that the recent political turmoil over judges' restoration could upend the Obama administration's near-completion plan for expansion in economic and security aid for Pakistan."

"Regular Courts Stop Functioning In Swat" "Dawn" (03/18)

"Courts in the Swat Valley stopped functioning on Tuesday after Tehrik Nifaz-e-Shariat-i-Muhammadi Chief Maulana Sufi Mohammad said that these courts were against Sharia and their continued functioning would be a violation of the agreement signed by the Provincial Government."

"Pakistan Not Satisfied With Indian Response" "Dawn" (03/18)

"Pakistan is not satisfied with the information and answers to its questions provided by India about the Mumbai attacks, including DNA test reports of the lone-surviving attacker, Ajmal Kasab, and other seven terrorists. 'We have gone through the 400-page document provided by India, but it does not meet our requirements,' a senior official of the Interior Ministry who did not want to be named told 'Dawn.'"

"India Calls For Quick Action Against Mumbai Attack Culprits" "Dawn" (03/18)

"India reaffirmed on Tuesday that it had replied to 30 questions posed by Pakistan pertaining to the dossier on the Mumbai terror attacks and said it expected Islamabad to bring the culprits to book sooner rather than later, Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon told reporters in New Delhi."

"U.S. Approves \$2 Billion Arms Deal With India" "Dawn" (03/18)

"The United States has approved the sale to India of eight Boeing anti-submarine aircraft, a 2.1 billion dollar transaction which would be the largest ever sale of U.S. arms to India, the State Department said on Tuesday."

"U.S. Drone Violate Pakistani Airspace" "The News" (03/18)

"U.S. drones intruded into Pakistani airspace on Tuesday and continued hovering in South and North Waziristan, Kurram and Orakzai agencies, tribal sources told 'The News' from Wana."

"Rao Qamar Assumes Command Of PAF Today" "The News" (03/18)

"New Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Rao Qamar Suleman will take over command of the Pakistan air Force (PAF) today (Wednesday). He succeeds the outgoing Air Chief ACM Tanvir Mehmood Ahmed."

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Editorials/Op-eds  
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"Right Face," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (03/18)

"With the impediment of the restoration of the judges now cleared away we may be able to travel a little further along the road to democratic maturity.... The judges issue could and should have been resolved months ago. It has served as a distraction from bigger business - business that now needs attending to without delay."

"Solution To All Problems: Implementation Of Charter Of Democracy," an editorial in liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 100,000) (03/18)

"Recent developments had created a rift between the two parties, tones had become harsh and they were expressing dislike for each other. However, the decision to reinstate judges has changed the situation a great deal. If the parties let go of this bitterness, there is no reason why the nation cannot have the same cordial atmosphere we saw at the start of the democratic process."

"Back To The Business Of Terrorism," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (03/18)

"Because of politicization of terrorism, Pakistan has lost both face and faith in the world community. It is today facing not only terrorism but also charges of terrorism. Will the politicians choose to come together and use the Parliament to strengthen Pakistan instead of weakening it?"

"The Army's Role," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (03/18)

"A simple chronology of the crisis shows that the Chief of Army Staff did not intervene once, but several times, in what was essentially a political matter, which should have been settled between politicians.... No doubt, spectators are uncomfortable, and this role sits ill on those trained to be men of action. But

constitutional rule requires that state institutions should obey, and not be as anxious to save the state as our military professes itself to be."

"Need For Healing Touch," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (03/18)

"Our foreign friends, whose major focus is to eliminate the Taliban and Al Qaeda presence in our tribal belt, now realize that political stability is a precondition. But despite this main concern that makes the allocation of funds absolutely necessary, they have threatened that unless the two quarrelling political parties come to an understanding and create stable conditions, they would withhold the monetary assistance. It is time our leaders listen to such voices coming out both from home and abroad."

"Fix The Structure," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (03/18)

"But now that the decks have been cleared - Gen. Musharraf is gone, Chief Justice Chaudhry is to be restored, the Senate elections have been held and the threat of street agitation has receded - the politicians must immediately address the structural issues.... If we are ever to get out of the rut of instability, the rules governing the system must be reset. Now is the chance. Allow it to slip by, and the country is guaranteed to suffer again."

"Need For A Better Start," an editorial in Hyderabad based Sindhi Daily "Kawish" (cir. 105,000) (03/18)

"With the restoration of the deposed judges, political tensions must be reduced. The elected government besides waging war against terrorism must work for the elimination of poverty, hunger, unemployment and inflation."

"Chapter Of NRO Closed," an editorial in the Karachi-based right-wing pro-Jamaat-e-Islami Urdu daily "Jasarat" (cir. 3,000) (03/18)

"By restoring the judiciary, the PPP government has saved its declining credibility, although for the time being. It is a fact that the U.S., Britain and the Pak Army exerted their clout to arrive at this decision."

"Nation's Expectations After The Long March's Success," an editorial in the Lahore-based populist center-right Urdu daily "Khabrain" (cir. 50,000) (03/18)

"There is a need to make powerful individuals and institutions realize that the nation has pinned great hopes on the 'system.'... Hence these hopes must be fulfilled while remaining within the bounds of law and constitution. Wherever there is a concentration of power -- negating the spirit of democracy -- it must be shifted to the institutions."

"Judges Restored, What Next?," an editorial in the country's premier business newspaper, "Business Recorder" (cir. 25,000) (03/18)

"The Government of Pakistan has taken a loan from Asian Development Bank for judicial reforms. The objective was to bring transparency through induction of technology in fixing of court cases. Not only do judges need re-training, the judicial system needs re-tooling.... It should not be forgotten that but for the corrupt and inefficient judicial officers in Swat, the people there would not have endorsed Sufi Mohammad's justification for the Qazi courts."

"Struggle To Stabilize Institutions Also Required," an editorial in the leading mass circulation centrist Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (03/18)

"People of Pakistan want immediate justice to redress their grievances, and perhaps that is the reason behind the overwhelming partaking of a large number of people in the restoration of the judges' drive. The popular support for Taliban in Swat is also an expression of this aspiration for justice. Conceivably that is why the government has introduced the 'Nizam-i-Adl' in those areas, and has setup 'Qazi' courts. Now we will have to see whether this system works under the government's jurisdiction, and to what extent it delivers real justice to the local community."

"Taliban Courts?," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (03/18)

"Islamabad claims that judges and magistrates will head the Qazi Courts in Swat. Sufi Mohammad says that they must stop attending office. So who will preside over these 'Courts'? The Taliban? Representatives of Sufi Mohammad and his son-in-law Fazlullah? What sort of justice will they dole out? Will these 'Judges' abide by the laws of jurisprudence, of whatever ilk, or pass judgment in accordance with their personal likes and dislikes or individual view of morality? Will petty thieves have their hands chopped off? Will women be taken to these 'Courts' if they dare to venture out of their homes? The state has some answering to do. The people of Pakistan need to know if the government is upholding the rule of law or sanctioning a descent into the medieval age."

"The Victory: Myth, Reality And The Future," an op-ed by Nasim Zehra in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (03/18)

"As Nawaz Sharif's street following became evident closer to March 10 the shuttling of the U.S. Ambassador and calls from Washington too began focusing on avoiding the March 16 confrontation. The Americans who reportedly earlier would ask perceptive Islamabad-based politicians what if the president fires Gilani and that Nawaz Sharif doesn't have too much street support, were concerned about imminent violence on the streets of Pakistan. Washington, like the GHQ, had no prescriptions. As the D-Day approached they had recognized that the only solution was what the two years of determined and unshakable struggle of the lawyers had spelled out -- restoration of the November 2, 2007, judiciary."

"A Victory For The Nation And For Justice," an op-ed by Shireen M. Mazari in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (03/18)

"There are still many challenges confronting this nation - not only in the judicial context but also on many fronts. We still have to fight the continuing destabilization of the country by the US with its killings in FATA. We still have a problem of terrorism that has changed qualitatively as a direct result of our state's alliance with the U.S. in its military agenda in Pakistan and Afghanistan. There is the evil of religious extremism that is eroding at the tolerant Islamic ethos of traditional Pakistan on the one hand, and the growing extremism of the westernized elite on the other, both reducing the space for moderates and acceptance of 'the other.'"

"Light At The End Of The Tunnel?," an op-ed by Hajrah Mumtaz in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (03/18)

"Monday's resolution of the chief Justice affair was forced or facilitated by Gen. Kayani on the one hand, and U.S./U.K. pressure on the other.... The success of peaceful demonstration has great value for Pakistan given that various elements are increasingly turning to militancy. The so-called gun culture is a reality in Pakistan and history has tended to teach a frustrated citizenry that peaceful protest is an exercise in futility."

"Enemy Of Internal Stability," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-right sensationalist Urdu daily "Ummat" (cir. 33,000) (03/18)

"At a time when every Pakistani is rejoicing the reinstatement of the judges, a bomb rocked a locality of Rawalpindi that killed 14 people. Who is responsible for this act of terrorism, which clearly aims to undermine the internal stability of the country? It seems that our enemy wants to alienate our people from the democratic government of a nuclear-power Muslim country. And their agenda is to undermine Pakistan, and to achieve this objective not only the U.S. but also India and Israel have been supporting these mercenaries."

"Rawalpindi Suicide Attack: An Attempt To Sabotage The Peace Process," an editorial in liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 100,000) (03/18)

"Now that the judges issue has been resolved, PPP and PML-Nawaz must cooperate with each other because the speed with which the plague of terrorism is spreading in the country demands that we strengthen the country [so terrorism can be controlled]."

"Small Mercies," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (03/18)

"We are fortunate that the worst did not happen. But we must not forget that the need to regain control over the security situation in the country is greater than ever. The expansion of terrorism seen over the past decade also means it is possible to use it when needed to cover up other acts.... The terrorism we encounter from week to week, from month to month, must be stopped."

"Another Suicide Attack," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English daily "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (03/18)

"Understandably, a clear link can be established between the U.S. strikes in Pakistan's tribal areas and the occurrence of suicide bombings in the settled areas. The drone attacks have resulted in intensifying suicide attacks against security personnel and inside the settled areas of the country."

"Why Mullah Umar Will Not Talk," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (03/18)

"Needless to say, the 'eastern' mind was not properly understood: the eastern or tribal man doesn't 'talk' when it gets the upper hand; it wants to go for the kill and demands total surrender."  
Patterson